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**IMPRIMATUR:**

**Narcissus Dublin,**

*December 17. 1695.*

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206.

THE  
NECESSITY and ADVANTAGES  
OF  
FAMILY PRAYER,  
IN TWO  
SERMONS,  
PREACHED AT  
ST PETERS  
DUBLIN.

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By THOMAS POLLARD, Minister of ~~St. Peters~~  
St. Peters, and Chaplain to His Excellency HENRY  
Lord CAPELL, Lord Deputy General and General  
Governour of IRELAND.

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DUBLIN:

Printed by Joseph Ray, and are to be Sold at the Three  
Naggs Heads in Essex-street. 1696.

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FAMILY PRAYER

07/05/2017

2 B R M O N 3

RECEIVED AT

SECRET

1871

THE MAJOR GENERAL

215000



**TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE**

**And Truly Virtuous LADY**

**THE  
LADY CAPELL.**

**Madam!**



**W**HEN I consider the Necessity of  
the great Duty of Family Prayer  
towards Restoring the Church  
to its Primitive Piety and Repu-  
tation; and withall reflect upon  
the wretched Neglect of it among  
us, I have often thought, that as it deserves  
the most Vigorous Endeavours of the Clergy,  
so it needs the Authority of the Greatest Names  
and

*The Dedication.*

and most Exemplary Virtue to Retrieve and bring it into Credit: 'Tis the consideration of this and of the Right that Entitles Your Ladishyp to all my Labors and Services, which makes Me Ambitious, as well as bound to prefix Your Great Name to this Small Discourse. For as Providence has placed Your Honour in the highest Orb of our Hemisphere, so You Move and Shine there with such Exemplary Piety and Eminent Virtue that You Enlighten and Guide all about You. And were Your Regular and Constant Observance of Family Prayer followed by all of Title and Quality among us, 'twould more powerfully recommend that Duty, then the most Pathetick Perswasives from the Press or Pulpit possibly could do. And whilst Your Honour dayly manifests so great Prudence and Exemplary Piety in the Management of Your Family at home; and His Excellency, Your Dear Lord, such Virtuous and Wise Conduct in the Government of the great Family of the Nation, and is so much concerned for the Building and Repairing of Churches, and consequently for the Promotion of God's Service, and the Prosperity of the true *Established Religion*, as to make it the One the Chief Thing,  
His

*The Dedication.*

His Excellency Recommended to the Care of the Parliament. We have yet Great Hopes to see Piety and the Protestant Religion Spread and Flourish in this Kingdom; and that the Auspicious Influence of His Great Virtue and Equal Government will Render it in Reallity, what it was once in Title, *An Island of Saints.*

That therefore You may go on successfully, and live long in Health and Prosperity together, and this Kingdom Rejoyce as long in the Happy Enjoyment of You both, is the earnest Prayer of

*Madam,*

*Your Ladyships*

*most obedient humble Servants*

*and Chaplains,*

*Tho. Pollard.*

The Declaration

The Executive, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, do hereby declare that the United States of America, in order to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, have adopted the following Declaration, in Witness whereof, the Senators of the United States, the Representatives in Congress, the President, and the Judges of the Supreme Court, have signed their Names, and the Great Seal of the United States has been hereunto affixed, in Testimony whereof, the said Declaration is inrolled in the Records of the Senate, and the same is published to the People of the United States.

in Witness whereof

we have hereunto set our Hands and the Great Seal of the United States

this 4th day of July, 1776

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THE  
P R E F A C E  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**N**OT only the Irreligious Disuse of Family Prayer, but also the Distribution of great Numbers of a small Book, Entitled Plain Devotions for Mean Capacities, was the occasion of the following Discourse; that as his Grace the Arch Bishop of Dublin was at the Charge of Printing several Thousands of these small Books of Devotion, for the use of such People, who are either so poor that they are not able to provide themselves with others, or else so careless and negligent that they will not; that his Graces Charity and Pious Designs might not be frustrated, I thought it my Duty to render this Charity to the Souls of Men, as effectual as I could by shewing the Necessity and Advantages of Family Prayer; the wofull neglect of which has been a greater Reproach and Loss to our Religion then many Men are aware of; I must confess the great Blame or Detriment must be accounted for by Masters of Families, who are therefore the more highly Concern'd to see that

## The Preface to

*this Duty be constantly and faithfully discharg'd; for the Established Church has very well provided for the Safety and Salvation of Mens Souls, so far as concerns the Publick; and there is nothing wanting to make us a Holy People, but the following her Godly Admonitions: Thus what care is taken in this City, that neither constant sound Preaching, nor dayly Prayers, nor frequent Sacraments, nor any thing that may contribute to the good of Souls be omitted here? but are all most zealously promoted by our Good Arch Bishop, who as he is himself an Eminent Example of the Primitive Piety and Humility, so he does most industriously endeavour to restore it among others: Thus how diligent and earnest has he been to bring Piety and Virtue into Reputation, through the whole Course of his Parochial Visitations and Confirmations by his Paternal Admonitions and wholsom Instructions? and more particularly in this City by his Seasonable and useful Charity in purchasing of such Books as tend to the Promotion of Piety and the true Religion? 'twas to this end he bestowed many Hundreds of the late Arch Bishop of Canterburys Sermons Entitled A Perswasive to Frequent Communions, and many Hundreds of his Six Sermons lately published and bound together, with great numbers of the small Books of Plain Devotions; and all this for the Encouragement of Piety, and to possess the Minds of Men with a due sense of Religion. And as his Grace has been so favourable as to judge this small Discourse not altogether improper for that End, so I must in gratitude own, that He has not onely Encouraged the Publishing of it, but has been at the Charge of the whole Edition: And indeed the Subject, (how weakly soever managed by me,) is of that Importance, that I have often wonder'd how it has escaped (if it has) the learned Pens of this Age; for among all the Practicall Subjects, that have been so judiciously and usefully treated of by our great Divines, I do not hear of any that have professedly made this their Argument;*

the Reader.

7  
gement; tho I have enquired of many; And this Consideration likewise had some Influence on the Publishing this Discourse; tho at the same time I am not ignorant how Censorious the world is, and that every Man that appeareth in Print does as it were tye himself to the Stake to be baited by every one whom either Malice or ill Nature may set on; but if by exposing my self, I can bring but one Stone towards the Rearing up of Gods Temple, or be any way assistant to the building up the People of God in Piety and a holy life, I shall not be discouraged; If any shall be so injurious as to render evil to my good Intentions, my comfort is that my Labor is with the Lord, who has declared that he will accept of a willing heart, and has appointed cheap Sacrifices, that the poor may not be discouraged from throwing their Mite into the Corban, no more than those that cast in of their Abundance. What ever it is, I have done my best for the promoting the great Duty of Family Prayer; And that God may make it Effectual to Engage us all to the Conscientious discharge of it, as it was the great Aim and Design of this Undertaking, so it shall be the earnest Prayer of

Your Humble Servant,

T. P.

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## ERRATA.

**P**Age 1 Line 10 read Molaters. l. 12 r. superledes. p. 21. 22 r. The extent  
p. 91. 7 r. midft. l. 20 r. midft. p. 101. 6 r. in a manner proper only to.  
p. 101. 28 r. infinite. l. 30 r. infinite. p. 111. 24 r. devote. l. 31 r. charge  
p. 15 l. 19 r. wickedness. p. 17. l. 20 r. off. p. 18 l. 31 r. and p. 19 l. 7 r. mc-  
lancholly.

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T W O

# S E R M O N S

Preached at St. P E T E R S Church,

On 1 Tim. 2d. Chapter, and the 8th. Verse.

*I will therefore that Men Pray every where, lifting  
up holy Hands, without wrath and doubting.*

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**T**HE very imbred notions of mere *natural Religion* may sufficiently inform us of the indispensable necessity of the great Duty of Prayer; for there has been no *People so Barbarous*, but as they always owned a God and some sort of Religion, so they as constantly accounted Prayer a part of the Homage and Service that was justly due to their several Deities.

This great Truth is so apparent that there is neither *Temple* nor *Altar*, neither *Priest* nor *Sacrifice*, but is a demonstration of it, and the practice even of the blindest Idolators renders it so evident, that it superseeds the necessity of an Instance.

Now St. Paul who in the 7th. v. tells us, *He was Ordain-  
ed the Apostle of the Gentiles*, takes special care to improve

this piece of *Natural Religion* in both *Jews* and *Gentiles* by this *Apostolical Canon* in the words of my Text : *I will therefore that men pray, &c.*

The word (*Therefore*) having relation to the Verse preceding, I suppose the Sense of the *Apostle* may be to this purpose.

By vertue of this my *Apostolical Charge* and *Function*, I do will and ordain that men do not confine their *Devotion*, as did the *Jews* to *Jerusalem*, or any other *Place*, but that as *Occasion* offers and *Duty* requires, they *Pray everywhere*, in all *Places*, looking not so much to those outward *Circumstances*, as to the *Inward Devotion* of the *Heart*, that as the *Jews* took care to wash their *Hands* before they did *Approach* their *Altars*, so it should be the chief concern of all *Christians*, to endeavour that *Purity* thereby signified, to lift up *holy hands* and *hearts* unto God, and always to *Pray* in *Holiness*, *Charity* and *Faith*.

This is the sense of the *Apostle*.

In which words these three Particulars are contained.

First, A *Duty* enjoyned, and that is *Prayer*, I will that *Men Pray*.

Secondly, that extent of this *Duty*, as to *Place*; *Every where, i: e: in all Places*, where either *Opportunity* offers, or *Necessity* requires: For I suppose, this *Apostolical Canon* must be confined with the same *Limitations*, with other general *Precepts*; such as *Pray without ceasing*, men ought always to pray, &c. which are as extensive in respect of *Time*, as this is of *Place*; and yet cannot be understood according to the utmost *Extent* of their *Signification*; that was an ancient *Heresy* and condemn'd by the *Church* as an unreasonable *Enthusiasm*.

Thirdly, Here are the qualifications of the Persons that must *Pray*, *Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*.

As to the First of these, the *Duty* Enjoyn'd, which is *Prayer*; 'tis not my *Design* in this *Discourse*, to insist either upon

on the Nature, the Necessity, the Advantages, or the several Parts or Divisions of Prayer, in general: These are heads frequently Treated of among us; but my Chief Design at present, is to treat of *Family Prayer*, and that with all the plainness the Nature of the Subject does require: A duty that needs pressing on the Consciences of men; for I fear 'tis very much neglected by the Generality of People among us; and yet as Necessary to promote Piety, Religion, and Vertue, in the world, as most that I can think on.

And this I Suppose may be properly enough reduced to the Second head of this Discourse, the extent of this Duty as to Place, *I will that men Pray every where*

Which sure must be extended to our *Families*, as well as our *Churches*, and our *Closets*: there being many reasons to induce us so to do.

And in treating of *Family Prayer*, I shall shew you; First, the Obligation to it.

Secondly, the Advantages of it; both which being made out, I hope it may contribute something to the Reviving and Encouraging this so much Neglected, and yet so Necessary and Profitable a Duty.

As to the Obligation to *Family Prayer*, tho we do not find any express positive Command, yet the holy *Scriptures* do abound with as many General Precepts as do sufficiently imply it.

And these are so Explain'd and Corroborated by the Practice and Example of holy men in all ages, as, (I think,) can leave us not room to doubt of the obligation to the Duty: Especially if we will take that for an Obligation in this Case, which we do in others of the like Nature, as in that of Infant Baptism, the Observation of the Lords Day, &c. In which some general Expressions in *Scripture*, and those Confirmed by the Constant *Practice* of the *Church* (which is the best Commentary in such cases) are Generally looked upon.

upon as sufficient Authority to establish the Observation both of the one and the other. And I am sure there are more general Precepts, and these more full and extensive in Relation to *Prayers*, then can be produced in the favour of either of the former.

Thus we find the *Holy Spirit* so full, so general, and so earnest in the Pressing of this holy Duty, as evidently Demonstrates both the Necessity and Excellency of it.

Thus we are Commanded to *Pray always; to Pray without ceasing; to continue Instant in Prayer; to watch unto Prayer with all perseverance; to labour fervently in Prayer; in every thing by Prayer and Supplication to let our Requests be made Known unto God; to strive in Prayer; Night and Day Praying Exceedingly; and here in my Text, to Pray every where.* And if all these, and many more, do not include, and are not sufficient to Enforce the Obligation of *Family Prayer*, what will become of *Infant Baptism*, the observation of the *Christian Sabbath*, and some other things as Generally received in the *Christian Church*? Especially since this Religious Practice is recommended to us by the Examples of holy men in all ages; the memory of many of whom, to their never dying honour, is recorded in Holy Scripture, for their Religious Care and Conduct in their *Families*.

Thus when the *Holy Ghost* speaks of *Abraham*, as of the mighty Prince, from whom a great & mighty Nation, and even the *Saviour of Mankind*, in whom all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed, was to *Descend*, he Ascribes this as the Reason of this Extraordinary Honour; *for I Know him* (saith God) *that he will Command his Children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do Justice and Judgment,* 18. Gen: 18: 19. 'Twas because God Knew him that he would not onely keep up the *Worship and Fear of God* in his own *Family*; but would make it his great Care to have it Propagated in Succeeding Generations.

And

And as honorable mention is made of *Josuah's* Brave Resolution, on much the same account too, *But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord*, 24. Josh: 15: What ever the Jews should resolve on, he has Determined, that himself and all under his immediate *Care and Conduct*, should be punctual and constant in the *service of the Lord*.

'Tis a received Opinion that every man in his own house is a King, Priest and Prophet, and in the first Ages of the world, their Authority was more visible in the Execution of those several *Offices*, then in more distant times: *Josuah* was Resolved to assert his *Authority* in each, and therefore he Engages to God for himself and his whole *Household*.

And still there remains so much of this *Primitive Power* in every *Master* of a *Family*, as to render him accountable to God, if he neglects his *Duty* to them in any of these Respects, (*i. e.*) in the just Government as a *King*, in the necessary Instruction as a *Prophet*, or the constant offering up the Sacrifice of Prayers and Praises in his *Family* as a *Priest*.

For the Office of a *Priest* was to offer *Sacrifice*, and what *Sacrifice* can the *Christian Master* offer in his *Family*, but the *Sacrifice* of Praise & Thanksgiving, the devoting of themselves, Soul's and Bodies to be a *reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto God*? And he that Neglects the dayly performance of this is not true to his *Trust*; for as God has made him a *Priest* and *Ruler* over his *Household*, so he expects that he should give them, as their *meat and drink*, so their *spiritual food and nourishment* in due season: And he that fails in this Duty, Christ has declared that *God will cut him asunder*, and appoint him his portion with the *Hypocrites*, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: 24: Math: 51. We read likewise what a singular kindness God had for *Cornelius* upon this very account, how he honoured him with an *extraordinary vision*, with the Embassy of an *Angel*, to assure him in what kind Remembrance his *Prayers and his Alms were had before God*, to direct him in

the right way to Heaven, and shew him what further Improvements he should make that he might attain *Eternal Life*. And what was the reason that God had this particular Care and concern for this person, that was not yet a Convert to the Christian Faith?

The Text tells us, 'twas because *he was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and gave much Alms to the People, and Prayed to God always.* 10 Acts. 2.

And because he lived up to the *Light* God had Bless'd him with, and was so careful to plant the *Fear of God* in the hearts of all that appertain'd to him, God vouchsafes unto him largeness, and even miraculous *Discoveries* of the *mystery of Godliness*, and of the things that pertain to eternal life. According to the Observation of the Psalmist, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant,* 25 Psalm: 14.

'Twas much thus the *Church of Christ* was gather'd in the beginning, when every man was zealous to convert and build up his *Family* in the *Faith* of the *Holy Jesus*, when every *Christians house* was a *Chappel* for *Devotion*, an *Oratory* or *Sanctuary* Dedicated to the service of God, in the Holy Offices of Prayers and Religion; and therefore properly enough Saluted by St. Paul, by the name of the *Church in their house*; and as *Theophilast* observes, for this very reason; even because of the great Care and Conduct of the *Master* of the *Family* in Converting all to the *Faith*, and training them up in the ways of Piety and virtue; so that every *Family* is the *Church of Christ* in *Epitome*, and the whole Church is but the great *Family* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And the First and best Christians whose Extraordinary Piety made such large and early Conquests over the Heathen world, and converted them from their gross Idolatry and Immoralities to the Reception of the *holy faith*, were so punctual in all *Family Religion*, that ancient Writers tell us, that



that they had the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours constantly set apart for *Family Prayer* and *Devotions*, and whether they did *eat* or *drink*, or whatever they did, they did all to the *Glory* of *God*, always opening and shutting up the day with *Prayers* and *Thanksgivings*; nay so Zealous were they in the beginning, that they were wont to rise at midnight to Pray and Sing Hymns unto God. Thus constant and ardent was the Primitive Piety and Devotion.

And all this *Care* and *Concern* for our *Families* is no more then the nature of our *Duty* does oblige us to, all under our *Cure* and *Government* being a *Trust* committed to us by Providence, of which *God* will be sure to Exact an *account* of us; And if we suffer any of them to miscarry and be undone for Ever through our *mismanagement* and *neglect*, we shall, and that for very good reason, in the great day of *Retribution*, find our worst *enemies* and *accusers* to be those of our *own house*, whom we have neglected to Train up in the fear of *God*, and in the *Principles* of *Christianity*, whom we have permitted to lead Irreligious and Licentious Lives, by not obliging them to constant *Family Devotions*, whereby the *Fear* of *God* and the sense of *Duty* and *Religion* might be always kept fresh upon their souls, and should be the great Principle that should govern and preserve them in all their ways, and then our *Guilt* and *Punishment* will be so much the greater, by how much we live under greater obligations to take Care of them.

Now what security can Governours of *Families* generally have that their Children & Servants use any *Devotions* to *God* at all? what assurance can they have that they ever say their *Prayers*, where *Family Prayer* is totally neglected? we are sure all do not, nor easily can attend the *publick Prayers* of the *Church*; and as for their own *private Devotions*, they are too often, and (I fear) with many altogether supplanted, either through the sloth and Irreligion of some, or the business and diversions of others: And what

what a sad thing is it to have a *household* that have not the least *Fear of God* before their Eyes! whereas he that has constant *Prayers* in his house, and takes care that his whole *Family* be present at them, is sure to preserve some *seal* of *Religion* among them, and is certain that his *Charge* does not expose themselves to the *Dangers* and *Temptations* of the world, without begging his *Protection*, who alone is able to preserve them from evil.

But on the other hand he that altogether neglects this Duty, may (for ought he knows) have some under his charge, that live as it were *without God in the world*, without either owning *Dependence* on him, or begging support and *Protection* from him.

And what a dreadful Cry will those raise against him at the last day! and what an aggravation of Guilt and Punishment will it be, when his Children and Servants shall lay all their miscarriages at his door! shall *require their blood* at his hands crying for vengeance against him! alas then how will he be confounded with shame, and grief, and fear! how will he hide his guilty head, and in vain call to the *hills & mountains* to cover him! when they shall declare before God, Angels and Men, that his not *restraining* them, his not *keeping* them to their *Duty*, was the reason they had thrown off all *fear of God*, and consequently were to be miserable to all Eternity.

It then the account we must one day make for our Children, who are a natural part of our selves, and for our Servants, who by the *Laws of God and Man*, are committed to our Care, can any ways oblige us; we see what *obligation* lies upon us, Morning and Evening *every day*, to Address to the *Throne of Grace* with our whole Families, to beg those things that are necessary for us, both in relation to this Life and that which is to come.

And this brings me to the Second thing I proposed to be  
Treated



Treated of: To shew you the Advantages of Family Prayer.

And in this place we might justly insist on all the great things that are spoken of the *Power & Prevalency of Prayer* in general; the *Promises* that are made to *Prayer*, being equally applicable to *Family Devotions*; as to other *Prayer*, Christ having assured us that *where two or three are met together in his name he will be in the midst of them*: And the Psalmist does declare that *the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him in Truth, he will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him, he will also hear their cry and will save them.* 145 Psal: 18, 19. v.

Here then I might shew that *Prayer* is the Ladder by which we climb up to the *Throne of Grace*, to acquaint God with our wants and desires, and that on the same Ladder the holy *Angels* descend with help and assistance; this is the true Interpretation of *Jacob's Vision*, there is nothing so prevalent with God as the earnest and holy *Devotions* of pious souls, they are the best Protection, and the greatest security against the wrath of God, the malice of the Devil, and the mischeivous Designs of wicked men: Fervent *Prayer* will make us more then Conquerors amidst all our Dangers and our Enemies; the time would fail me to give you Instances in each of these particulars; and much more should I enlarge on all the wonderful Effects of holy & devout *Prayers*, which the *Holy Ghost* it self has taken care to Record for our Encouragement to the constant practice of this so divine and prevailing method, that God has prescribed for the Sons of Men, to hold as it were an *Entercourse* and *Correspondence* with Heaven, how that he is pleased to bow the Heaven and come down with help and deliverance; and at the requests of his holy suppliants, to open and shut the windows of Heaven, to remove Diseases and restore Health, to subdue Sin and bestow Grace, to vanquish God's and the Churches Enemies; in a word, to become all things unto all people according to their several wants and necessities.

But because my design is to recommend and engage you, if possible, to the performance of *Family Prayers*, I shall confine my self.

And altho, all the forementioned Advantages are common to *Family* with other *Devotions*, I shall insist onely on those Advantages that are proper to *Family Prayers*; i. e. in respect of the general Influence they have upon all people.

The First of these I shall mention is, that the constant performance of this Duty is an excellent means and of general Influence to keep the fear of God, and the just sense of Religion fresh upon the minds of all those that are constant in it and present at it.

For some define Prayer to be *Ομιλία πρὸς τὸν θεόν* a conversing or discoursing of the Soul with God. 'Tis certainly an elevation of the Soul to God, whereby we do express our manifold wants and miseries, and own our constant and entire Dependence on that Infinite Fountain of Goodness for the Relief of them, fixing our Thoughts and Contemplations on the divine Perfections of the tremendous Majesty of Heaven; and if ever we approach him as we ought, we must Address his Throne with the humblest and most devout Acknowledgments of his holy Attributes, of his Sovereignty and Power, of his Omnipresence and Omniscience, of his Goodness and Mercy, and in a word of every Perfection that may encourage a poor humble Suppliant, deeply sensible of his wants and miseries, to Address to the Throne of Grace, in Faith and full assurance, that God will hear and gratifie him in the Grant of these Requests, that God in his infinit wisdom sees fit for him; And can any man approach the Throne of God, with the just sense of these awful and Infinite perfections, and not be deeply possessed with the fear of this Excellent and Tremendous Majesty? can he chuse but entertain the noblest sentiments of God and Religion? but sure it is impossible to maintain a just Reverence of God without these holy Addresses; so that there is a Natural,

*tural*, as well as *Moral Efficacy in Prayers* rightly address, to keep the *Fear of God* and the sense of *Religion* fresh upon the Souls of all those that duely perform them.

Nay our very *Prayers* themselves are so many Obligations to *Virtue* and *Holiness*, for when we come to *Confess* our sins 'tis not to tell a melancholly story, or because we believe God ignorant of our miscarriages; but to humble our selves for them and to renounce and abjure them for ever; or otherwise to *Confess* would be the deepest Hypocrisy, or which is worse to *Glory in our shame*.

When we pray to God for Grace and Strength to enable us to walk in his ways and to serve him in holiness of life, if we are *serious* and in *earnest*, we declare our *Resolutions* of doing so, and our *Requests* become our *Vows* and *Engagements* to perform it.

And again when we *praise* God, and *magnify* his great and holy name for his unspeakable *Glory* and *Goodness*, 'tis not to make the sorry Offer of the *calves* of our *Lips*, much less to flatter the *Majesty* of Heaven, but to *inflame* our hearts with his *love*, and to breath out our Souls, as a Sacrifice of Gratitude, by offering up our *Selves* to his *service*, and by *walking before him* in *Holiness* and *Righteousness* all our days? and indeed the whole *Duty* is but a kind of *Fealty* and *Homage* whereby we devout our selves unto God.

But perhaps you will ask, since this is an Advantage common to all Devotions how come I to appropriate it to *Family Prayer*?

I answer by granting that it is the advantage of all *Prayers* rightly and constantly address to God; but then you must remember that where *Family Prayer* is not maintained, we cannot be sure but some of our *charg* may neglect all *Prayer*, and we know by sad experience that the generality of people are not so constant in their *Devotions*; the Servants of a *Family* (as I hinted before) can't easily attend the *Publick*; and either  
 sloth

sloth or business, or negligence, or irreligion makes them too often omit their *private Prayers*; and if they go to *Church* once on a *Lords day* (which is commonly as often as some of them can be spared, and oftner then others of them use to do) and receive there some Impressions of *Virtue* and *Religion*; yet these for want of being cherish'd and renew'd by the frequent *Addressing* our selves to the *Throne of Grace*, and so filling our minds with the just Apprehension of *God* and his Holy *Attributes*, are apt to wear off and languish at least, and so bring forth no fruit unto *Holiness* and *Perfection*.

But when the *Morning* and *Evening Sacrifice of Prayer* is constantly offer'd up in the *Family*; all these holy Impressions are water'd and cherish'd with the dew of *Heaven*, till they bring forth much fruit, they are in every devout Prayer new stamp'd upon the Soul, and they leave a deep and lasting *Impression* there, so that the fear of *God* is kept fresh and lively upon the minds of the *Family*. And therefore I look upon this advantage as in a manner proper to *Family Devotions and Instructions*, at least in respect of the generallity; because it can't be so easily and generally attain'd without it. But where this *Duty* is conscientiously observ'd, there the fear and love of *God* do commonly demonstrate themselves in the *holy* and *religious lives* both of *Children* and *Servants*, as was to be seen in the *Family* of *Abraham*, then whom scarce any man had ever a more *Dutiful Son*, or more *faithful Servant*; witness the Submission of *Isaac*, when he was about to be Sacrificed, and the Care and Faithfulness of *Eliezer* in Serving his *Master*, and the pains he was at in providing a Wife for his *Masters Son*.

'Tis a most undoubted Truth, there is nothing can give *Masters* or *Parents* so great security for the *Dutifulness of Children*, and the *Fidelity of Servants*, as the *Fear of God*, and a true sense of *Religion*; which cannot easily be maintain'd in any *Family*, where the *Duty of Family Prayer* is altogether neglected.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another Advantage of *Family Prayer* is the procuring and drawing down the Blessings of God, and these both *Spiritual* and *Temporal* upon the *Families* where *it* is used.

For *Spiritual* Graces are not dispenced like the common Blessings of Sun and Rain, whether Men desire them or no.

But they must be earnestly and humbly sought for, if we expect to obtain them: For Christ has not oblig'd himself to give unless we ask, nor promised that we shall find unless we seek. And it is our greatest Honour as well as our highest Interest, to have Access to God in all our wants and difficulties; who has declared, *That he will honour those that honour him, and despise those that lightly regard him.*

As sure all do, that do not look upon him, as the fountain from whence all their Blessings are derived; and by constant Application to him, own their intire dependance on him for them.

Grace is the special, and one of the distinguishing *Gifts of God*. And he does not cast such *Pearl before Swine*, that neither seek them nor regard them.

And the Blessing of God is as necessary to our Temporal as our *Spiritual* welfare, and therefore the Psalmist does assure us, that *it is vain to rise up early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of cares and sorrows, unless God gives a Blessing to our Endeavours.*

Gods Providence Governs and Over-Rules all humane Affairs, and therefore he must not be left out in a business that so wholly depends upon him, that whosoever *plants or waters*, 'tis he alone must give the Increase.

As whole Families sometimes are engaged in the same business and designs, so very often they labour under the same Afflictions and Calamities: To be sure they have the same Graces to Pray for, and many of the same Sins to confess and beg Pardon for; and therefore as their Interests are united, so should their *Spiritual* forces, their Prayers be, *Helping to-*

gether by their joynt Prayers and Supplications to obtain the Blessing.

And were we throughly convinc'd of the necessity of Gods favouring our Designs, and did set a just Estimate on his Blessing, we should not fail, so often as we do, by fervent and united Prayers to engage his favour and Protection.

If we need *Family Blessings*, why should we be wanting in our *Family Devotions*? Is not Gods Favour worth the Praying for? or do we believe that God is bound to prostitute his mercies to those that do not so much as desire them, or will not be at the pains to ask them? this is not Gods usual method: but he has declared that *he will be found of those that seek him, and that he will draw nigh to those that call upon him faithfully, and that where two or three are met together in his name he is in the midst of them.*

So that we have all reason to believe that the *fervent united Prayers of the Righteous will avail much* in drawing down the Blessings of Heaven upon a *Family*.

Where this sweet *Incense* is duly *Ascending*, there the *Blessing and Favour of Heaven* is constantly *Descending* in Answer to the joynt Prayers of his holy Suppliants.

So that if we do believe that the Divine Providence is concerned in the management of the World, If we have any Regard to the Blessing and Assistance of Heaven, 'tis certainly our Honour and Interest as well as our Duty to have constant Recourse to God, and in every thing by Prayers and Supplications with Thanksgiving to let our Requests be made known unto him. 4. Phil. 6.

Thirdly, I am perswaded that the constant observance of *Family Prayers* will go a great way in Reforming this wicked and degenerate Age.

We have already seen the aptitude of Prayers, not onely to Plant, but to Cherish the *Fear of God* and the sense of Religion in the minds of Men; And I have withall intimated

unto



unto you, that unless the *Governour of a Family* does take some Care, that all under his *Charge* do meet together at *Family Prayers*, how probable it is, that many of them may totally neglect that Duty, and live as it were *without God in the world*: And if so 'tis no wonder we have so many disobedient Children, and wicked Servants; 'tis no wonder that such people are given up to all Licentiousness, and that the world is over-run with wickedness and prophaness.

Now in all likelihood, one of the best Cures for this General Depravation, next every ones care to cleanse his own heart and reform himself, would be to take care of his *Family*, to instruct them well in the *Principles of Religion*, and to keep them constant to the *worship of God* in their several *houses*.

This Method in all likelihood would have a kindly Influence on those, whom the Publick Ministry cannot so easily affect by reason of their unfrequency at it, and their unpreparedness for it.

'Tis vain for us then to exclaim against the wickedness of the Age, when we will not be at the pains to begin a Reformation at our own *Families*, hardly at our *Selves*.

But were that breath bestow'd in hearty Prayers that we spend in fruitless murmuring and complaining, did we lay out that care and thoughtfulness in managing our *Families* to *Gods Glory*, that we loose in vain reflections and exclamations on the Corruptness of the Age, (which yet we help to make worse by our own wretched Negligence and Irreligion) we might hope to see a more general *Reformation*, and that these Young Plants, which are so tenderly water'd and cherish'd with the dew of Heaven in the Religious Nurseries of our Houses, would at length grow into tall Trees; that would not only Support, but Adorn the House of God, and bring forth much fruit unto Holiness.

As the *Church* is the great and publick *Family* of *Christ*, and is compos'd of many private ones, so if these private *Families* are well Instructed in Religion and encourag'd in the constant and devout worshiping of *God*, they will at once compose and adorn the *Church* of *Christ*; and not only private Masters of *Families* themselves; but the whole *State* would share in the Advantages of their Devout and Religious Educations.

And indeed if men had any just concern for themselves and their own welfare, they would not neglect their *Families*; For as the Learned and Ingenious *Bishop Hall* has observed, *He that sits at the common Stern cannot distinguish between his own safety and his Vessels: Both drown at once, or at once salute the Haven.*

I must confess if we faithfully discharge our Duty to our *Families*, tho they perish, yet we may deliver our own Souls, but if they perish through our neglect, what ever Care we take of our own Souls, we must be answerable for theirs; *they shall perish in their Iniquity, but God will require their blood at our hands.*

For what will it avail us to be frequent and attentive in hearing, constant and fervent in Praying, zealous and devout in Receiving the Holy Sacrament, when in the mean time we neglect our *Families*, suffer them to persevere in all sorts of *Licentiousness* and *Irreligion* and take no care to discharge those Duties to them, which every of those holy Offices strictly oblige us to perform? to what end do we make such warm pretensions to Religion, when we live in the constant neglect of so necessary a part of it? this is to be partial in our obedience, and it is not to serve *God* with all our heart and all our strength.

And besides the constant and regular discharge of this Duty will be a good Method to convert Sinners, as from the Error of their *Ways*, so of their *Judgment* too.

'Tis



'Tis too usual with many of us to Admit Persons of different *Faiths* and *Perswasions* into our *Families*, and when we do so (which is not very advisable where others can be had) charity to their Souls will oblige us to do what we can to Cure them of their *Error* and their *Ignorance*, to bring home those straying Sheep unto *Christs Fold*, and to train them up in the *right way*. Now these people, as indeed few others, are seldom prevail'd upon by dint of *Argument*; because the *Art* and *Dexterity* of *Learned Men* may *Dress up Error* so very like *Truth*, that it will need a sounder *Judgment* and an acuter *Wit*, than the generality of men are *Masters of*, to distinguish the one from the other; And therefore People are apt to suspect their own *weakness*, rather than their *cause*, some *Extraordinary Art* in the *Arguer* or some *Fallacy* in the *Argument*, rather than any *Error* in their *Perswasion*; and this *Method* is likely to add but few to the *Church*.

But when they see us serious and constant in our *Devotions*, *Holy* and *Exemplary* in our *Lives* and *Conversations*, this will wear of their *Prejudices* to our holy *Religion*, and in time so powerfully recommend it to their *Affections* and *good Opinion*, that they will expect to find *Truth* there, where they see so much *Piety* and *Virtue*; This is the Easiest and most *Effectual* way gently to dispel those *Errors*, which other *methods* commonly render more *obstinate*.

Innocency and a constant sincere *Piety* have great *Charms* in them 'twas by the *Power* of these that *Christianity* Conquer'd the *Heathen world* in the *begining*, and thus it will in time too vanquish its greatest *Enemies* and *Opposers*.

But if *Strangers* and *Aliens* to our *Faith* observe us regardless of our *God* and our *Religion*, 'twill make them much more regardless: for who can have any great value for that *Faith* which hath so little influence on its own *Professors*.

What is commonly pretended in Excuse of the Neglect of this *Duty*, is either want of *Time* or *Ability* to Perform it Both which Excuses are very *Unseemly* in the mouth of a *Christian*, and will avail nothing before *God*.

For First, To pretend want of *Time*, when so very little of it will serve, and we throw away so much of it in the folly of sin, the vanities of the world, and in Ceremonious, and to say no worse, Impertinent Visits, is all one as to declare that God who gives us all our *Time*, deserves not the least share of it himself, and that the smallest Portion of it spent in his service, in begging his Pardon and desiring his Grace is look'd upon as lost time and labour, and that they may employ it to much better purpose either in their Business or Diversions: For they in effect declare that they have not *Time* to throw away in such Trifles as securing Gods *Favour* and *Protection* here, and *Heaven* hereafter. But sure when those Irreligious wretches come to dye, or enter upon a vast Eternity, they will be (tho' too late) sensible of their ungrateful folly, and would give all the world (were it in their Power) to redeem a few of these precious *Opportunities*, they have either neglected or mispent.

The old Proverb tells us that Prayer and Provender never hinder a Journey, we are sure Prayer was never any hindrance to any honest undertaking.

And did people really believe and seriously consider of what mighty *Importance* the *Favour* and *Protection* of God was in all our *Concerns*, they would not think that quarter of an hour ill spent which was employed in calling our *Families* together, in imploring the *Blessing* of God upon our *Endeavours*, and begging all things that are necessary both for our Souls or Bodies:

And as vain is it to pretend want of *Ability* to perform this important *Duty*, since there are so many good Books of Devotion extant, which, if the *Master*, or any of the *Family*

can read, will easily supply this Defect. I suppose few *Families* are without a *Common Prayer Book*, and in that are *Prayers* very proper on this *Occasion*. But if any are so poor (for I will suppose none so covetous) as not to be able to reach the purchase of one of these, the Clergy of *Dublin* out of a just Compassion to these poor Creatures, a deep sense of the necessity of this Duty, and a malencholly apprehension of the woful neglect of it, have set forth a small Book, (many hundreds of which his Grace the *Arch Bishop* of *Dublin*, out of his great Charity and Tenderneſs to the Souls of the Poor, has paid for, and sent them to the several *Ministers* of this *City*, together with some other very good and useful Books, to be Distributed among poor *Housekeepers*, and such as are likely to make the best use of them,) and this small *Book* will clearly take off this objection, and supply them with *Ejaculations* and *Prayers* upon many occasions, and will render them inexcusable, if they neglect so fair an opportunity, and are sonder of raising *Cavils* than discharging their *Duty* and if there are any *Families* wherein none can read, they must be at the pains to learn some of these without book, that so necessary and important a *Duty*, as the *worshiping of God in our Families*, may not be neglected by any that call themselves *Christians*.

And that in the last day, when they must give an account of their Stewardship, they may not stand charged with the sins of their *Families*, for not giving them their Spiritual Food and Instructions in due Season.

Thirdly, the last particular contained in the words. Is the *Qualifications and Dispositions of those that must Pray, Lifting up holy hands, &c.*

I have spent so much time in prosecution of the former heads, that I shall not detain you long with these.

The First Qualification then here mentioned is Holiness, *Lifting up holy hands.*

'Tis an expression that has an allusion to a Custom among the Jews, who used constantly to wash before Prayers; to this custom likewise the Psalmists alludes, in these words, *I will wash my hands in Innocency, and so will I compass thine Altars:* And indeed purity of heart and actions is the thing signified in both places. Which, as it is necessary by way, of *Pattern* and *Example* to his Family, so it is no less a necessary Qualification in every worshiper of the most holy God, and God so strictly requires it, that we find he rejects the most solemn Services for the want of it: Thus he demands of his own People *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices?* and declares that for this reason, their most religious performances were a trouble to him, and that he was weary to bear them. And further adds, *when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, when you make many Prayers I will not bear,* 1. Isaiah.

And why should God reject what himself had so strictly enjoyed? the Text tells us 'twas because *their hands were full of blood.*

God is a most holy God, and as *Holiness* becometh his House, so much more his Worshipers: He cannot behold Iniquity, especially in his votaries; he cannot endure Prayers that proceed from prophane Lips; to worship the most Holy God, and yet resolve to live in a contradiction to his *Essential Holiness*, and that Purity that he requires in his votaries, is with the Jews of old, to bend the Knee, and cry hail Master and buffet him; 'tis a mocking of God to his face and is the greatest affront we can put upon his immaculate Majesty.

Some of the more learned Heathens were of opinion, that the Imitation of God was the best worship of him; 'tis most certainly a very proper and necessary preparative to it; for unless something of the Image of God, of his vital Goodness Righteousness and Holiness be drawn upon our Souls, as we shall not see God so as to enjoy him hereafter; so neither are

are we fit to *address* unto him *now*: For God will not own us for his *Children*, nor give ear unto our *Prayers*, unless he sees something of his own *Features* and *Likeness* in us; without this to call upon his *Holy Name* is to prophane it.

And if such people make Application to him, he will say to them now, as he has declared he will at the last day, *Depart from me ye workers of Iniquity, what hast thou to do to take my Covenant in thy Mouth*: Such mock Worshipers are more likely to awaken Gods Justice, than to obtain his Favour; and this (as *Bias* observes) the very Heathen was aware of, when in a Storm, he said to some Debauched Fellows, *Hold your peace, lest God should know such wicked fellows sailed here.*

Secondly, The next Qualification here mentioned, is *To be without wrath, i. e.* without any Anger or Malice, without any Quarrels or Dissentions; and it implies to be in *Charity* with all Men, our very *Enemies* not excepted.

The Flames of Malice Hatred and Envy are strange Fire to offer upon Gods Altar, who delights in a meek, humble and charitable Spirit; And has commanded us to *forgive*, as we expect *forgiveness*; so that in every Prayer of ours, we beg Gods Mercies and Compassions on condition of our own; *Forgive as we forgive*; which must imply either the *measure*, or *condition* of our *forgiveness*, or *both*. Neither is this peculiar onely to the Lords Prayer, (as some imagine) for our Saviour himself makes it the condition of *all Prayer*, when ye stand praying *forgive*, and if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive your *Trespases*. And after all these plain Declarations, consider whether he be in a fit temper to beg mercy and pardon of God, that denys it to his Brother, and appears

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before



before God in the heats of *Wrath* and *Passion*, in the stead of those of *Love* and *Devotion*? No; this is not agreeable to the meek and humble Spirit of the *Gospel*, 'tis not a *Temper* that God *loves*, or can bear with in his *Votaries*; but expects and does in effect say to every one that *addresses to his Throne*, as *7 seph* once said to his Brethren, *Ye shall not see my face, except your Brother be with you.*

The last Qualification here mentioned; is, *To be without (Doubting)* the word in the Original is *διαλογισμῷ* which some think to have relation to the *Wrath* that was spoken of just before, and then as that signifies *Bloody mindedness and Malice, &c.* so this will signify the *Plotting and Contriving* of that wicked design, which was before in the mind and desire: And as *Critiques* observe, so the word is sometimes used. And if we take it in this sense, we have already consider'd it under the former head.

But if the word signifies as 'tis translated in our Bibles, (*without Doubting*) then it has relation to that Faith and Trust in God, which is necessary in every worshiper of that infinitely Gracious and Omnipotent Being; and is to the same purpose with that of *St. James*, 1. Chap. the 5. 6. v. *If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the Sea, driven with the wind and tossed: i. e.* He that asks any thing of God, and mistrusts either his Power, his Goodness, or his Truth, is a wavering and unstable Man, is in a perpetual tempest and agitation of Mind, he knows not where to fix, nor whom to apply to, but is rackt, between Hope and Fear, and toss'd from one Refuge, from one hold to another: And when the Storm of Afflictions

ons and Persecutions blows hard, and rises high, *the Anchor of his Soul*, not being *sure and steadfast* can't hold him; but he is apt to leave God, and betake himself to creature Dependances; and 'tis no wonder that God forsakes him when he deserts God, is *unstable in all his ways*, and wants that Qualification required by our Saviour, in the 11th. of St. Mark. 9. v. *What things soever ye desire when ye Pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them: i. e.* so far as God sees them fit and necessary for us; and he that comes to God without this Faith and Assurance, does affront his Power, his Goodness or his Truth, and justly deserves to meet with that Neglect or Repulse which he feared: For, as St. James observes, *Such a man must not think, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord:* x. James 7.

And thus now I have consider'd the Obligations to, the Advantages of, and the qualifications for *Family Prayer*; so far as my Text gave me occasion to discourse of them.

And oh now that I could as easily engage all *Parents and Masters*, to the Conscientious *Practise* of this *Duty*, as I have proved the necessity and advantages of it. What happy Days, What Religious Families, What Holy Congregations might we not hope to see? And truly if ever we expect to see *Religion and Virtue* take firm Root and Flourish in our World, next every Mans beginning a Reformation at his own Heart, his second care must be that of his *Family*; for the first Seeds of Virtue or Vice are sown here, and we may assure our selves that if *Piety* does not begin at our *Houses*, *Judgment* will, according to Gods threat by his Prophet: *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen, and upon the Families that call not on thy Name*; where, as the Prophet

*Prophet* ranks them with *Heathens*, so he distinguishes them not in the furious judgment that shall be poured out upon them, so that if we had any true *Love* for our selves, any real *concern* for our Children, or any just *value* for God's Favour and Protection, and did seriously weigh all these, we would not, nay, we could not, upon any terms live in the constant neglect of this most necessary Duty, (as I fear too many among us do)

There are three things I would earnestly recommend to you, as the most efficacious of any I can think of, for the suppressing of Sin, and the Promotion of true Religion and Virtue. And these are,

1st. Constant *Family Prayer* and *Instruction*.

2dly, a Strict and Religious *Observation* of the *Lords Day*. And

3dly, *Frequent Communion*s: For the conscientious discharge of these, will so season and possess the heart with the *Principles* of *Virtue* and *Religion*, and lay such powerful restraints upon the Conscience, that it will not be easy for any man to break through all these to his sin. And I must desire you to Remember, that the foundation of the two latter is laid in the Conscientious Discharge of the former. A *Religious Care* of our *Families* being the foundation Stone upon which we must raise the whole *Spiritual Superstructure*: And will not onely Qualify, but strongly incline us to the conscientious observance of all the Duties of *Religion*; for our Children and our Servants while young and tender, are like Clay in the hands of a Potter, and we may mould them into what form we please, and the shape we work them



them to now is likeliest to grow up and continue with them; So that if we now put the *Byass of Religion* upon their hearts, and train them up in the way they should walk in, in all likelihood, when they are old, they will not depart from it; but whether they do or no, whatever becomes of them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we shall be sure to reap great benefit to our selves by our *Religious Care*, we shall be sure to *Deliver our own Souls* by the faithful discharge of this our Duty. And blessed is that *Servant* whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

All that I shall add is earnestly to beseech all Governours of Families who have lived in the constant omission of this Duty, that they would, if not for Gods sake, yet at least for their own, sadly and seriously consider, how much Sin and Misery, in all likelihood, they have been the fatal occasion of. How many Children and Servants have been, or are like to be undone for ever by this their deplorable neglect.

And with this consideration to possess their hearts with such shame and sorrow for their past omissions of this kind, as may work in them a *Repentance not to be repented of*, and create in them a firm Resolution that neither the temptations of the Devil, nor the love of the world, nor the carelessness or deadness of their own wicked hearts shall divert them from it, or shake their Resolution punctually and conscientiously to discharge it ever after.

But as the Holy Scripture takes notice that *Job offer'd Burnt Offerings for his Sons continually*, when amidst the danger of Sin and Temptation in their Feasting, so should every good Man constantly offer up the Sacrifices of Prayers

and Thanksgiving with his Children and his whole Family; for we are exposed to many Dangers and Temptations of all kinds; and therefore as we have great need of the Grace and Assistance of Heaven to protect and strengthen us, so we should not fail earnestly and constantly to desire it, nor humbly and duly, (as the Apostle speaks, with whose word I shall conclude this Discourse) *to bow the Knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, (i. e.) to be the one universal Church of Christ; that he would grant unto us according to the Riches of his Glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our Hearts by Faith, that we being rooted and grounded in love may be filled with all the fulness of God.*

*Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be Glory in the Churches by Christ Jesus throughout all Ages, world without end. Amen.*

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